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DAAG-PAP-A (M) (24 Nov 72) DAFFD-OTT - 72B 034

8 December 1972

SUBJECT: (6) Senior Officer Debriefing Report: Lieutenant General W. J. McCaffrey  
McCaffrey, Deputy Commander, United States Army, Vietnam,  
15 Jun 70 - 5 Sep 72 (U)

SEE DISTRIBUTION

(11) 5 Sep 72

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1. Reference: AR 525-14, Senior Officer Debriefing Program (U), 2 July 1971.
2. Transmitted herewith is the report of Lieutenant General W. J. McCaffrey, subject as above.
3. This report is provided to insure appropriate benefits are realized from the experiences of the author. The report should be reviewed in accordance with paragraphs 3 and 5, AR 525-14; however, it should not be interpreted as the official view of the Department of the Army, or of any agency of the Department of the Army.
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**SUBJECT: Senior Officer Debriefing Report, Lieutenant General  
W. J. McCaffrey, Deputy Commanding General, United  
States Army, Vietnam RCS: CSFOR-74**

**THRU: Commander in Chief  
United States Army, Pacific  
Fort Shafter, Hawaii**

**TO: Assistant Chief of Staff for Force Development  
ATTN: FOR-OT-VJ  
Department of the Army  
Washington, D. C. 20310**

**DEBRIEFING REPORT BY: Lieutenant General W. J. McCaffrey**

**DUTY ASSIGNMENT: Deputy Commanding General  
United States Army, Vietnam**

**INCLUSIVE DATES: 15 June 1970 thru 5 September 1972**

**DATE OF REPORT: 5 September 1972**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

**This report covers the period 15 June 1970 thru 5 September 1972.**

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## **2. OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT**

### **a. Area of Operations**

The Area of Operations is well known, has been fully described, and needs no further amplification.

### **b. Nature of the Enemy**

The hostile forces consist of the North Vietnamese Armed Forces supported by opposition elements from within South Vietnam, loosely described as the "Viet Cong." The enemy has steadily increased the sophistication of his weapons systems and in May 1972 was utilizing medium tanks, surface-to-air missiles, and surface-to-surface missile systems. He was massing tube artillery and using wire-guided missiles as antitank and anti-bunker weapons. His armament includes flame throwers, CS gas, mortars of various calibers, artillery to include the 130 mm, rocket artillery, heat-seeking antiaircraft missiles, radar-guided AA guns, and the Russian SAM II System.

The enemy employs effective communications security systems and has an extensive and successful program of penetrating friendly organizations.

### **c. Local Government Activities**

Considering the disruption and turmoil of a long and bitter war with both civil and external aspects, the effectiveness of the local government was fair. However, the commitment of the local population to the programs of the Government of South Vietnam varied widely, from dedicated support in certain factions to armed resistance by the Viet Cong infrastructure.

The policies and national programs of the South Vietnamese Government were positive and if implemented equitably would have done much to improve the life of the average Vietnamese citizen. However, in the implementation of its various responsibilities the government was beset by traditional corruption and chicanery as well as inexperience and inefficiency.

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Because of the fragility of the commitment of some of the populace to the support of the government and the dearth of competent leadership, the government in many cases had to continue to utilize the talents of individuals of questionable integrity or efficiency. This continues to pose great problems in building up public confidence in the machinery of government at all levels. The Revolutionary Development Schools operated at Vung Tau have been effective in turning out local leadership with potential for future service.

### 3. COMMAND RELATIONSHIPS

When General Westmoreland assumed command from General Harkins, US Army activities in Vietnam were advisory, administrative, or logistic in nature. During the course of General Westmoreland's tour the US role in Vietnam expanded explosively to a 550,000-man commitment involving all aspects of government aid. Essentially General Westmoreland organized MACV as a theater Army Headquarters with some joint representation in minor positions. The COMUS and his Deputy were both four-star US Army Officers; the Chief of Staff, J1, J2, J3, and J4 were Army Major Generals. The J5 (Plans) and J6 (Communications) were Air Force General Officers. The Special Staff was similarly Army-oriented. The Engineer, Provost Marshal, Director of Training, the Inspector General, the Judge Advocate, etc., were all Army Officers.

General Westmoreland and later General Abrams retained the title of Commanding General, USARV.

USARV then functioned essentially as a theater Army rear with MACV generally acting as a theater Army forward. In general, MACV exercised OPCON over all US Army combat forces while USARV administered and supplied all Army units.

Two personnel pipelines were organized, one funneling Army personnel into MACV and CORDS and the other providing Army replacements for all other units.

To provide coordination among the various Army units and with units of the other services and allies an area coordination system was established.



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USARV was the coordinator and each senior US Army officer in the Military Region acted as a regional coordinator, subdividing his area on down until one individual exercised responsibility for discipline, local security, and law and order in each geographical area. This system was marginally effective.

The regions, both US and ARVN, tended to become self-sufficient. Cooperation across regional boundaries, depending on the personalities of the commanders involved, was erratic. Units, once assigned to a region, tended to dig in and make work instead of moving around the country to wherever the action was.

The essentially Army component complexion of MACV led to a variety of situations in which strictly service matters were processed in joint channels, resulting in delay as the Joint Staffs attempted to grapple with financial, personnel, and other problems with which only the service departments could cope effectively. It should also be noted that had MACV established a standard Army component headquarters other problems would have surfaced.

In spite of these mechanical difficulties the command arrangements worked tolerably well because the senior officers at MACV and USARV were determined to make them work.

I register the view that USARV could have been more useful and taken more of a load off COMUSMACV if it had been used as a component headquarters.

#### 4. EXPERIENCES IN COMMAND

The role of USARV was to provide logistical support to Free World and US Forces and other agencies. This mission ran the gamut from the provision of the traditional classes of supplies to a multibillion-dollar construction program that moved South Vietnam from an agrarian economy into the industrial age within less than five years.

Finally, to comply with the President's Vietnamization policy, USARV redeployed the troops and equipment not required under the new policy

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while continuing to support the remaining US and Free World Forces.

Highlights of the period from 15 June 1970 to 1 July 1972 were the completion of the cross-border operation into Cambodia in 1970, the ARVN capture of Tchepone in February 1971, and the major offensive of the NVA launched at Easter 1972. In the first two cases USARV played a critical supporting role. In the final incident USARV has played a minor role and the ARVNAF ALCS have shouldered the main burdens formerly carried by the US Logistical Support Commands.

## 5. RELATIONSHIPS WITH HOST NATION FORCES AND GOVERNMENT

USARV was shielded from most direct contact with the ARVN Armed Forces by MACV. MACV reserved direct contacts with the Joint General Staff to that headquarters. This was due to the fact that the RVNAF were ostensibly headed by a Joint General Staff. In my opinion the RVN Armed Forces Joint General Staff was even less "Joint" than MACV, and the JGS was in reality the Army Senior Headquarters.

## 6. RELATIONSHIPS WITH THIRD-NATION FORCES

USARV enjoyed a very close and friendly relationship with the Australian Forces. The Australians paid their own way, handled their affairs like professionals, and were greatly admired.

USARV was responsible for providing logistical and Army Aviation Support to the ROKs. The ROKs were extremely sensitive about having US personnel in their areas. This was primarily, I suppose, because American presence gave credence to the idea that the ROKs were not competent to run their own affairs. Secondly, dishonest individuals kept up a broad-based, unrelenting assault on US resources. The variety and extent of the schemes to defraud the US was very discouraging. This led to a variety of defensive measures by US logistical agencies in an attempt to seal off the raids on US supplies, but no really satisfactory solution was developed. As one avenue of thievery was cut off a new one or more would be opened. The pressure was unremitting. USARV established a wide variety of controls designed to provide the ROKs with needed supplies but to insure that these supplies were not diverted for personal profit.

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## 7. ORGANIZATION

USARV as a theater Army headquarters (rear) was originally supported by the 1st Logistical Command. On 1 July 1970 the 1st Log Command was absorbed into the USARV Headquarters. This realignment made the Logistics Division of USARV both a planning and operating activity.

The staff of USARV was organized to carry out its operating and planning functions. DCSLOG had a host of day-to-day responsibilities left over from the Logistical Command which required rapid decisions of a command nature. Each Deputy Chief of Staff was empowered to take action in his field insuring coordination as appropriate with other interested agencies and the approval of broad policy matters by the command group.

CG USARV visited Headquarters USARV every six to eight weeks for an update briefing. DCG USARV attended the weekly WIEUs at MACV. All matters pertaining to the assignment of Army General Officers in Vietnam were cleared personally by the DCG with the CG.

## 8. TRAINING

USARV relied heavily on On-The-Job Training to meet the sudden imbalances between MOS availabilities and requirements. The American Officer and NCO proved to be a flexible and innovative individual, capable of reorienting himself to accomplish the task at hand. The NCO Training Programs in the CONUS did remarkably well considering the immaturity of the draftees and the unpopularity of the war. It was not uncommon for a soldier to serve in three distinctly different MOSs in the course of a normal tour.

USARV conducted schools and courses for ARVN soldiers in a variety of specialties. The Signal Corps and Engineers were most active in this field.

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USARV operated the Central Training Institute for the instruction of Local Nationals so that they would more effectively contribute to the USARV effort. These courses were conducted for resident students at Long Binh and for nonresidents at numerous locations. The courses included mechanical skills, leadership, and management training as well as specific technical functions such as auto mechanics, keypunch operations, typing, carpentering, drivers' training, and fork lift operations.

## **9. CIVIL DISTURBANCE OPERATIONS**

Although on several occasions US MPs had to be placed inside US compounds to safeguard US Government property, they were not utilized in any direct confrontations with Vietnamese civilians.

MP patrols were frequently caught up in small demonstrations by VN civilians at the sites of traffic accidents. These demonstrations occasionally became quite ugly and often resulted in damage to US vehicles or property and, infrequently, in injury to US personnel in the vicinity.

## **10. RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

A great effort was made during the Vietnam War to substitute gadgets for men and to reduce friendly battlefield casualties to the absolute minimum. Because of the effectiveness of enemy propaganda, considerable effort was made to minimize enemy noncombatant casualties, and the never-ending hope that the enemy would eventually prove reasonable spurred the R&D community to great heights. The major development from all this effort undoubtedly is the sensor program.

The sensors are expensive and complex to operate. Much pioneering in tactics and techniques has been done and it is apparent that we will use sensors in the future. The program at present, however, is just ceasing to be a "stunt" and much remains to be done in order to bring this system to its full potential.

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Hundreds of other "gadgets" were spawned in the fertile laboratories in CONUS and rushed over for testing under combat conditions. In almost every case it would have been better and quicker to have tried the item out under controlled conditions in CONUS. One example was the quiet airplane which kept having propeller troubles and finally was sent home. The concept was good but the hardware needed a longer period of testing and development.

In other areas the R&D community came up with some very usable items in a remarkably short period of time.

What the R&D Program needed was an Army tactical headquarters to provide the strong guidance and inspection that new developments require. USARV had the mission and MACV had the know-how.

## 10. CONCLUSIONS

The US effort in Vietnam and Southeast Asia never seemed to be unified. In the fields of tactics, operations, psychological warfare, and strategy several headquarters were involved. CINCPAC had part of the action; SAC, PACAF, 7th AF, the JCS, Secretary of Defense, the White House, embassies in Cambodia and Laos, and the CIA all intervened directly in the war at various times. COMUSMACV in general pulled it together but it did not appear as tidy as it might have been. The burden on COMUSMACV was extreme.

Lessons learned will be forthcoming for generations. My conviction is that our reluctance to use our power effectively unnecessarily lengthened the war, and cost us far more in the long run. War is too practical a matter to be turned over to the intellectuals. The early enthusiasm of the "Whiz Kids" of MacNamara's staff gave way to the despair of the liberal community in recent years as exemplified by Paul Warnke, Daniel Ellsberg, et al.

Militarily, US combat troops behaved admirably. Logistic operations were remarkable for their responsiveness. We simply never managed to develop a strategy that was acceptable to the US and Vietnamese people and governments, our allies, and the uncommitted nations of the world, and which was actually effective.

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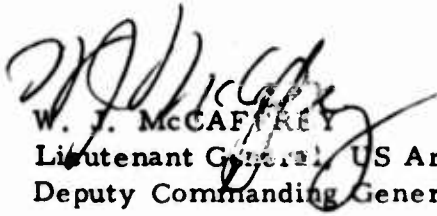
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As this is written, both the ARVN and the NVA seem to be too exhausted to deliver a knockout blow. Our Air and Naval Operations have not yet been decisive. Ground operations have been mixed, with a slight but growing edge to the ARVN. The ARVN soldier emerges as a remarkable individual who perseveres in spite of great hardships. He has earned a victory. The US soldier has demonstrated remarkable manhood in doing his duty in an unpopular war.

  
W. J. McCaffrey

Lieutenant General, US Army  
Deputy Commanding General

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